

# The spy who came in from the dugout

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WASHINGTON — Yankee owner George Steinbrenner, that man of many baseball firsts (Florida Industrialist of the Year), can now claim to be the only national pastime mogul with blown cover.

Along with details emerging last week from Steinbrenner's presidential pardon petition came the leak of his brief and shadowy career as a secret agent in service to his country.

Steinbrenner didn't respond to phone calls, but a close associate confirmed a Wall Street Journal report citing unnamed Reagan administration officials as saying that The Boss had recently done his all "in a matter involving national security."

One official said of Steinbrenner that "he bent over backwards to help the government."

## 'Secretive task'

Without giving specifics, Steinbrenner's friend said, "George did a rather significant task for our country. It was secretive in nature."

The friend said Steinbrenner's undercover work probably was a factor in President Ronald Reagan granting The Boss a pardon on Jan. 19 on Steinbrenner's felony conviction for making illegal campaign contributions to the 1972 campaign of President Richard Nixon.

Several former Watergate prosecutors said that they would have recommended against the pardon had they been consulted by the Justice Department.

"Why did Reagan do it? Obviously, George did something to prove himself to the President," the friend said. "I know he kicks over the milk a lot, but George was born on the Fourth of July and he's been a patriot ever since. He'd love to have been (Gen. George) Patton."

Congressional intelligence sources said they had no knowledge of Steinbrenner's cloak-and-dagger career, but said it was well-known that the late CIA Director William Casey had recruited business executives for spy work.

"The businesses could provide excellent cover—give assistance or employment to agents," said one source.

Another source wondered about Steinbrenner's spy designation: "Hell, he couldn't call himself 'Agent 007.' Mickey Mantle's number is retired."

All of which leaves the question of whether Hollywood will do a remake of one of the James Bond movies to be called "The Spy Who Fired Me," starring Billy Martin.

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